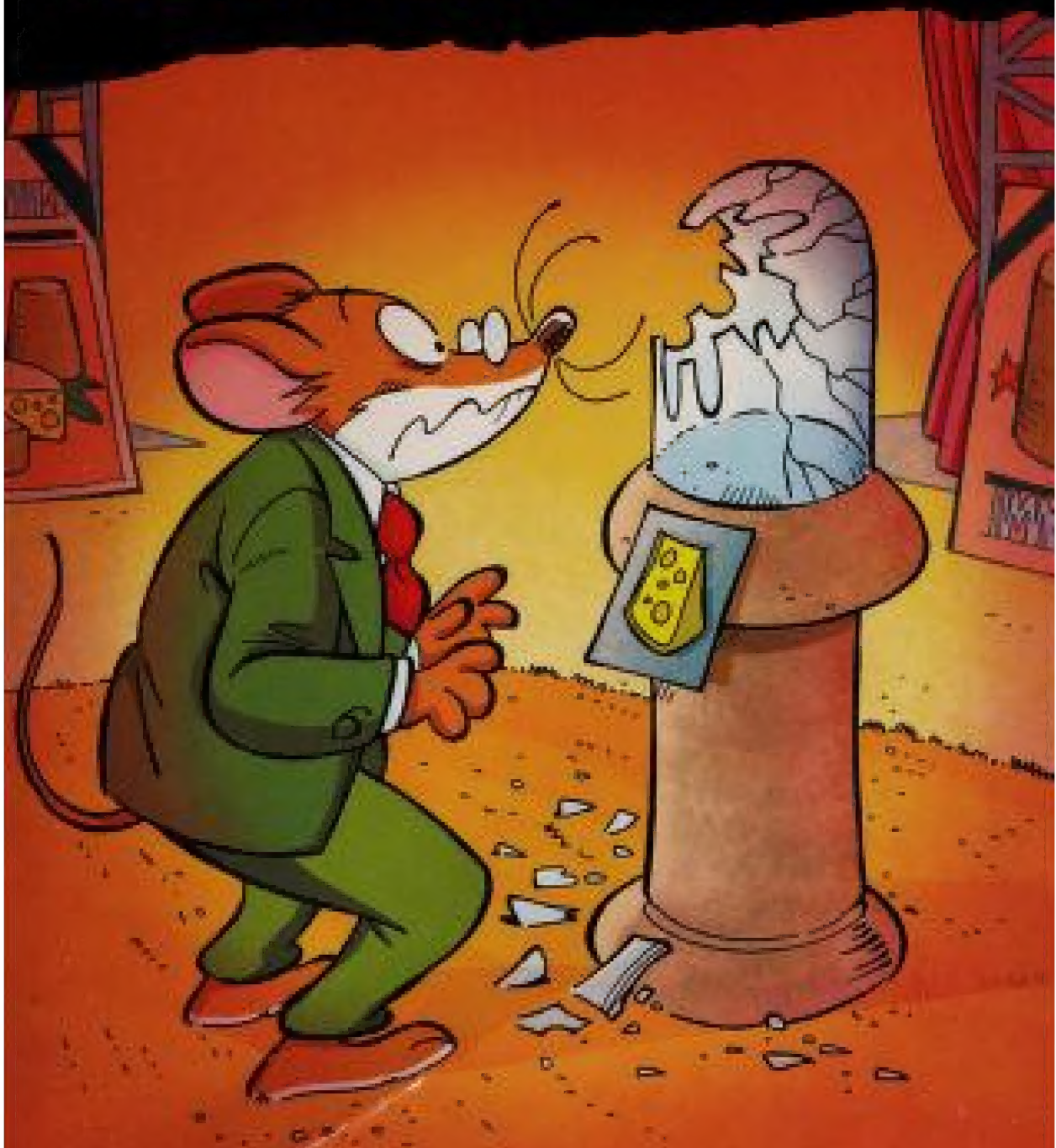


SCHOLASTIC



Geronimo Stilton

THE CHEESE BURGLAR



Created exclusively for you by Scholastic Reading Club

Geronimo Stilton

THE CHEESE BURGLAR



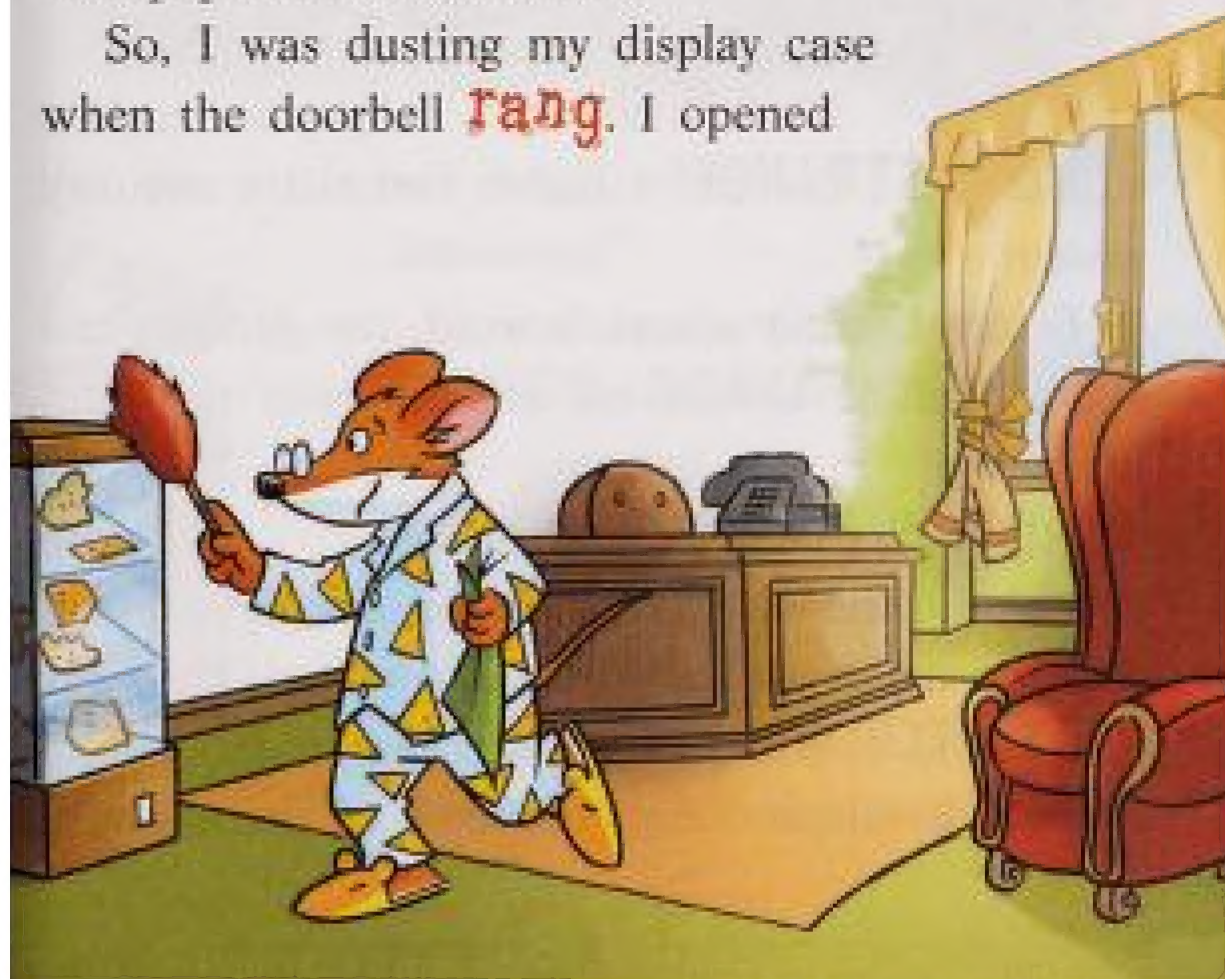
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A GARBAGE CAN FOR MR. STILTON!

It was a beautiful Saturday **morning** in spring. I was **dusting** the display case that held my precious cheese **rind** collection. You see, I have rinds dating from all the way back to the sixth century! They are my most prized possessions.

Oh, I'm so sorry, I almost forgot to introduce myself! My name is Stilton, Geronimo Stilton, and I run *The Rodent's Gazette*, the most **famous** newspaper on Mouse Island.

So, I was dusting my display case when the doorbell **rang**. I opened



the door to find a yellow **garbage can** with a sign that read: SECURITY SYSTEM.



HOW STRANGE! I hadn't ordered a security system.

Before I could squeak a word, the garbage can started rolling toward me and followed me right inside.

HOW WEIRD!

I closed the door and followed the garbage can into the living room. It just kept going! This was **VERY PECULIAR**. The garbage can started rolling around. It knocked over a couple of chairs and a



china vase. Then it slid toward my **precious** cheese rind display case!

I sprang **FORWARD** and tried to stop it. As soon as my paw touched the lid, a siren **blared**.

Moldy mozzarella! I had accidentally set off the alarm! I tried desperately to turn it off.

Suddenly, the garbage can spit out a sheet of paper. **"To deactivate the alarm, insert two (or three) bananas!"**



I finally understood.

"NOT AGAIN!" I shouted. **"Hello! "Get your tail out of there right now!"**

The garbage can's lid lifted up, and a snout I knew well peeked out.

"Hello, my dear Stilton!" How did you like my little prank?"

THE M.I.C.E. CONVENTION

It was my old friend Hercule Poirat, the detective! Hercule and I have been **friends** since we were just wee mouselets. I love him dearly, but I've always hated his pranks.

"Why in the name of cheese would you **DO** something like this?" I asked.

"Well, today you're going to present your cheese rind collection at **M.I.C.E.**, the annual Mouse Island Cheese Exhibition. So I thought that you might need a security system. The infamouse **Cheese Rind Bandit** is supposed to be there!"

"Rancid rat hairs!" I exclaimed. I had forgotten all about **M.I.C.E.**! When I received the invitation, I wasn't sure whether or not I should go. But then I learned that **Professor Reginald Rindrat**, the most famouse cheese rind collector of



all time, would be there. I **immediately** decided to attend.

The convention's **organizers** had offered each collector an **ARMORED CAR** so we could transport our antique rinds safely and securely. I had agreed, because I, too, had heard that the Cheese Rind Bandit was planning on making an appearance.



I looked at my watch: **IT WAS 9:50!**

"The armored car will be here in ten minutes," I exclaimed. "I have to hurry!"

"Do you need help, my dear Stilton?" asked Hercule.



"No, thank you."

"Would you like a banana?"

"No, thank you!"

"Here, let me peel one for you."

"No, thank
youuuuuuuu!!"

At that moment, the doorbell rang.

"Stilton, the armored car is here! Why don't I open the door for you?"

"Oh, all right, fine! **open** the door!"



TWO HELPERS, PLUS ONE MORE

Fortunately, it was not the armored car. It was my nephew **BENJAMIN** and his friend **Bugsy Wugsy**. They scurried in the front door.

"Hi, Uncle Geronimo!"

Benjamin exclaimed.

"Everything ready for the convention?"

"Hi, Benjamin," I said. I just **adore** that little mouse.

"Yes, I'm almost ready."



"Hello, Mr. Poirat!" Bugsy Wugsy said. "Are you exhibiting at the convention, too?"

"Not really," replied Poirat, peeling a **banana**. "My dear friend Stilton needed a helping paw, since he is **clumsier** than a gopher in a garbage can. So here I am!"

"Hmpf!" I muttered. "I'm not *that* clumsy!"

At that exact moment, I **slipped** on the banana peel Poirat had dropped on the floor. **Crusty**

cheese rinds, what a tumble!

"Are you hurt, Uncle G?" Buggy Wugsy asked.

She moved forward and accidentally **STEPPED** on my tail. *Yee-ouch!*

"Uncle, do you need our **help**, too?" Benjamin asked sweetly.

"We'll help you display your cheese **rinds!**" Buggy Wugsy offered.

"Well, I don't know . . ." I began.

"We'll keep an eye out for **SUSPICIOUS** rodents!"

"Well, I don't know . . ."

"Don't damage your little gray cells, Stilton," Poirat said. "Let us help!"

"**oh, all right!**" I finally agreed. I didn't seem to have a choice! "You can all come to the convention with me."

Just then, we heard the sound of a car horn out on the street.

Beep! Beep!



ARE YOU MR. STILTON?

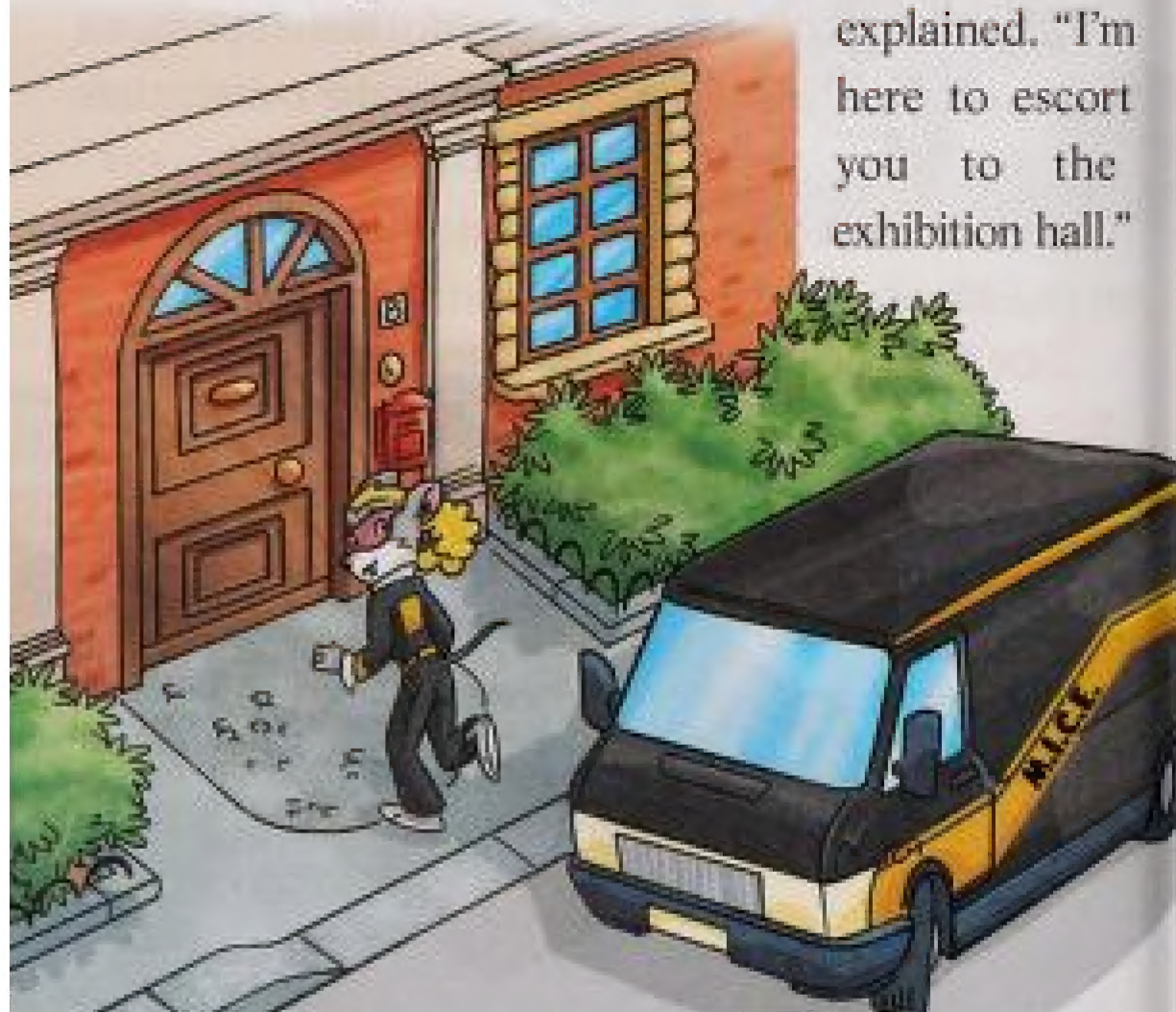
Bugsy Wugsy peeked out the window. "There's a **van** here, with a driver all dressed in **black**. She's waiting for you, Uncle G."

I opened the door. On the stoop stood a rodent with dark glasses and curly **blond** fur.

"Are you Mr. Stilton?" she asked.

"Yes, that's me," I replied.

"I'm doing security for **M.I.C.E.**," she explained. "I'm here to escort you to the exhibition hall."



"Oh yes, I'm **ready**!" I replied without thinking.

"Really?" She looked me over from snout to tail.

"Because it looks like you're still in your **pyjamas**."

"Oh yes, er, of course I am," I mumbled nervously.

"Just give me **one minute**, please."

It took me:

TEN seconds to wash my face.

TEN seconds to brush my teeth.

TEN seconds to get dressed.

FIVE seconds to comb my fur.

TWENTY seconds to stow the cheese
hides in my steel briefcase.

FIVE seconds to lock the door.

I was ready in exactly **one minute**! The security rodent was incredibly impressed.

I shook the security rodent's **paw**.

"My name is **Ashley Dow**," she said. "But you can call me Ash. Climb in and hold on tight!"

I scrambled into the van. Ash's powerful **perfume** made my snout spin. Hercule, Benjamin, and Bugsy Wugsy climbed in, too. The van sprang away from the curb faster than a **mousetrap spring**.

Holey cheese! I was terrified.

"Stilton," Hercule hissed. He was as **PALE** as mozzarella. "Can you





ask your new friend to slow down?"

"Yes, Uncle Geronimo,"

Benjamin agreed. "I'm feeling sick." His snout was as **green** as moldy cheddar.



But Bugsy Wugsy seemed fine. "Wow, this is like a **roller coaster!**" she exclaimed. "You're a great driver, Ms. Dow!"

"Thanks!" Ash replied. "You're **sweeter** than cheesecake."

The van stopped in front of the exhibition hall.

"**Here we are.**" Ash said.

As we scurried out of the van, I noticed something **dangling** from the wrist of Ash's uniform.



CLUE 1

What did Geronimo notice?

UNLUCKY NUMBER THIRTEEN

Ash, Hercule, Benjamin, Buggy Wuggy, and I scampered into the **ENORMOUSE** exhibition hall.

We followed Ash through the booths, where collectors from every part of Mouse Island were showing off their precious **cheese rinds**. There were rinds from every era, from **prehistory**



to the period of the Great Cat War, all the way to the Battle of Rateloo.

Ash stopped in front of **BOOTH 13**.

"Here's your booth, Mr. Stilton," she said. "I hope you're not superstitious. **Good luck!**" 🍀🍀

Then she left with a shake of her long blond fur.

Hercule pulled out a banana and started nibbling. "Booth number **THIRTEEN** is unlucky! We should try to switch with someone."

"I don't believe in bad luck," I began. Actually, I do, but I didn't want to say so in front of Benjamin.

Before I could continue, I slipped on the banana



poof! Hercule had just dropped on the floor.

"See, Stilton?" Hercule said as he, Benjamin, and Buggy Wugsy reached down to **HELP** me get up. "I was right. Today seems to be your **unlucky** day!"

"Are you **HURT**, Mr. Stilton?" came a squeak from behind me.

I whirled around and immediately recognized the rodent standing there.

"**Reginald Rindrat**, Mouse Island's most famous cheese rind collector!" I squeaked.

"Yes, that's me," he replied.
 "And it is a great **HONOR** to have you as a neighbor, Mr. Stilton. My booth is right here, number **fourteen!**"

"How nice of you to introduce yourself," Hercule **interrupted**.
 "I am Hercule Poirat, world-renowned private investigator and Geronimo Stilton's best friend. I am here to guard his **VERY PRECIOUS** cheese rind collection."

"I've heard a lot about your magnificent **COLLECTION**," replied Rindrat, shaking my paw. "Please come with me. I want to show you something truly **UNIQUE!**"

Reginald Rindrat led us to a small display case.





He removed the cloth that covered it and switched on a light, revealing a cheese rind with a greenish glow.

"Why, this is the last surviving cheese rind from the world-famous Samuel Stinktail collection, dating back to the sixteenth century!" I exclaimed.

"That is correct, Mr. Stilton!"

Rindrat replied. "You are a true cheese connoisseur."

"I've been hunting for this cheese rind since I was just a mouselet," I confessed. "How did you find it?"

"That is my little secret!"

Rindrat replied with a chuckle.

Hercule examined the display case. "This glass is so fragile . . . isn't that a little dangerous?"

"**DANGEROUS?** Not a chance!" replied a squeak from behind us. "Our security systems are the safest in the world."



Samuel Stinktail

A SUPER SECURITY SYSTEM

I turned to find myself snout-to-snout with an **elegant** female rodent just as Hercule stepped on my paw.

OUCH, OUCH, OUCHIE!

The lovely rodent had long blond **fur** and wore dark glasses.

"My name is **Flora Ratson**," she said. "I'm the convention's director."

"Nice to meet you," I squeaked. "My name is Geronimo Stil—"

"Mr. Stilton, of course!" she exclaimed. "We've



been waiting for you. You and Professor Rindrat are our guests of honor. Because your antique cheese rinds are so valuable, we are providing you with our state-of-the-art, **super-high-tech** security system."

She stepped toward Rindrat's display case and attached a special **KEYPAD**.



"It's very easy to use," she explained. "Just follow these **simple** steps:

1. Pick a five-number combination.
2. Memorize the combination.
3. Press each key once.



If you tap the wrong key, the **alarm** will immediately go off."

"What if someone figures out the combination?" Benjamin asked.

"The keypad is programmed to recognize your unique **paw prints**," Ms. Ratson explained. "If another rodent tries to press the same keys, the alarm will go off."

"**How fabulous!**" Rindrat exclaimed.

"Just let me clean the keys and you can choose your combination," Ms. Ratson said. "If there are traces of other pawprints, the system won't work properly."



She **sprayed** the keypad, and then asked us to turn around while Professor Rindrat chose his **five** numbers.

After Rindrat was done, we moved to my booth. Ms. Ratson used the **spray** and I selected my **combination**.

When I'd finished, Ms. Ratson said good-bye and scurried off.

BENJAMIN and Buggy Wugsy exchanged a **strange** look.

"What's up?" I asked them.

"Would you **clean** a keypad like that, Uncle G?" Buggy Wugsy asked.

"And would you wear **sunglasses** inside?" Benjamin asked.

I shrugged. "I don't know . . . Maybe I would if I were like Ms. Ratson. She's as **cool** as iced cheese!"

CLUE 2

Buggy Wugsy and Benjamin seem suspicious of Ms. Ratson. Why?

A LITTLE ACCIDENT

"I agree, my dear Stilton!" said Hercule. "I think that rodent is a big **LIAR!**"

"But she's the **DIRECTOR** of the convention," I protested.

"That may be true, but I'd still like to take a little look around this place," he replied before he **disappeared**.



Meanwhile, Benjamin and **Bugsy Wugsy** helped me create an **attractive** display of cheese rinds inside my case. Then I carefully entered my combination on the **KEYPAD**.

"Now that the rinds are safe, let's go take a look **around!**" I told Benjamin and Bugsy Wugsy.

The show was marvemouse. There were dozens of rare rinds, including one extremely rare prehistoric cheese **fossil**.



As we were walking by Professor Rindrat's booth, I stopped to admire Stinktail's rind.

All of a sudden, a rodent burst out from behind a display case.

"YOOOOO-hooooo!" I've made an interesting discovery!"

It was Hercule Poirat, of course!

"Why are you wearing those **YELLOW** gloves?" I asked my friend.

"Well, my dear Stilton," he replied, "I spotted the director wearing gloves just like these! She secretly pressed the keypad and . . . guess what? The **alarm** did not go off! Look."

He stretched his paw toward Rindrat's display case.

-Noooooooooooo!" I cried. I tried to stop him, but I stumbled, and my paw landed



right on the keypad. The alarm went off with a deafening screech.

WHEEE-OOOOO-WHEEE-OOOOO-WHEEE-OOOOO!

Security agents surrounded me instantly. And they were all pointing at me as if I were a **THIEF!**

Flora Ratson immediately scurried to the scene. "Please, gentlemen, everything is okay," she told the agents. "It was an **accident.**"

Then she turned to me. "See, Mr. Stilton? No chance of theft! Let me clean the keypad." As she **sprayed** the keys again, I noticed she was indeed wearing black **GLOVES.**

"Uncle G, did you see that?" Buggy Wugsy asked.



CLUE 3

What did Buggy Wugsy see?

STICKY PAWS

Before I could reply, **Professor Rindrat** scampered toward me. "Mr. Stilton, I am very sorry about what just happened."

"Oh, **thank you!**" I replied. "I thought you would suspect me, too."

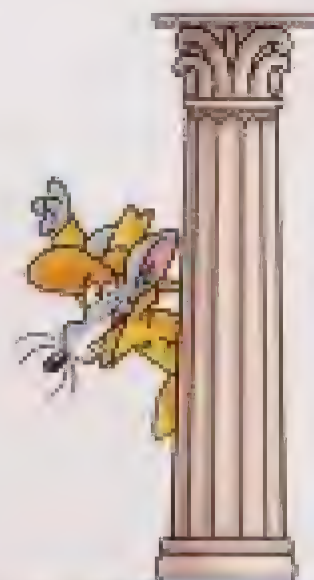
"Never!" he declared. "Not a **gentlemouse** like you! As a matter of fact, why don't we get a bite together?"

"What a nice idea!" I replied. Then I decided to really impress the professor. "I accept, but **only** if it's on me."

"That's very **kind** of you," Professor Rindrat said.

At that moment, Hercule's snout **POKED OUT** from behind a column. "**Food?** I'll join you!"

Right outside the exhibition hall there was a little restaurant with a strange name: **THE BIG SPENDER BISTRO.**



We were about to sit down when Rindrat excused himself.

"I must go wash my **paws**," he said. "They feel **STICKY**."

"Me too," I replied, following him.

When we returned to the table, Poirat was already ordering.

"Yes, I'd like to start with **one** appetizer of mixed bananas, **two** servings of banana fondue, **three** banana omelets, **four** slices of banana bread, and **five** pieces of banana pie."

"Your friend has an exceptionally large **appetite**!" Professor Rindrat observed.

Bugsy Wusgy and Benjamin laughed.



Meanwhile, I was **sweatier** than a slimy slice of Swiss. I had taken a look at the prices on the menu. Now I knew why this place was called **THE BIG SPENDER BISTRO**: To eat here, you had to be a **big spender**!

When the bill came, the meal cost more than my most **precious** antique cheese rind! But everybody seemed satisfied and full, and that made me **happy**.

We headed back to the hall so we wouldn't miss the opening speech of the **M.I.C.E.** convention.

As we scampered along, I overheard a conversation between two passing rodents. "My right paw feels **STICKY**."

"Mine, too!" came the reply.

Hmm, that was interesting . . .

Benjamin noticed my **thoughtful** expression. "I think I know what's making everyone's paws sticky, Uncle Geronimo."

CLUE 4

What have all the M.I.C.E.
attendees touched with their
right paws?

IT CAN'T BE THE SAME RODENT!

Bugsy Wugsy, Benjamin, and I joined the rest of the rodents in the exhibition hall.

As for Hercule, he had **disappeared** again.

All the major scholars of **Comparative Rindology** sat at a long table at the front of the hall.

I recognized Professor Ratoloff, author of the influential book **Rindology: Cheese Rinds from Prehistory to the Present**, and also Professor



Scrimprat, whose manual **Rindonomics: 1,001 Fun Ways to Preserve Your Cheese Rind Collection** was one of my favorite books on collecting.

At last, Ms. Ratson scurried up to the **MICROPHONE**. "Hello, cheese lovers! It is with great pleasure that we kick off our annual convention . . ."

Hercule had **slipped** into the seat behind me. "No! It can't be the same rodent!" he whispered.

"Shhh!" I said. "I can't hear a word she's squeaking!"

"But this rodent doesn't resemble her . . ." he continued.

"Shhh! Please, shut your snout!"

"Take my binoculars, Stilton!" Hercule insisted. "Does it look like her?"

"Like who?" I asked. "What are you **squeaking** about?"

"Actually, Uncle, I think Mr. Poirat is **RIGHT**," Benjamin whispered. "That mouse isn't the same rodent we **met** this morning!"



CLUE 5

How is this Flora Ratson
different?

CLAPPING AND NAPPING

But if the rodent squeaking was the real Flora Ratson, then **who** had we met earlier?

I turned around to tell Poirat he was right, but he had disappeared again!

Meanwhile, the director finished up her speech.

There was a round of **APPLAUSE**.

Clap! Clap! Clap!

"And a hearty thank-you to our security guards."

Ms. Ratson continued, gesturing to the agents lined up next to her on the stage.

There was a second round of **APPLAUSE**.

Clap! Clap! Clap!





I noticed Ash Dow among the agents on stage.

"And a final thank-you goes to the **ASH DOW COMPANY** for donating all our security systems!"

There was a third round of **APPLAUSE!**

Clap! Clap! Clap!

"And now, I turn the floor over to Professor Snoozemouse, twelfth-century cheddar rind expert."

There was absolutely no **APPLAUSE!**

Within two minutes, every mouse was sound asleep, including me.

All of a sudden, Hercule **POKEO** me.

"Wake up, Stilton!" he squeaked. "Something is about to happen, I can tell. **JUST LOOK AT THE STAGE!**"

I looked at the stage. Poirat was right! In fact, something had already happened.

CLUE 6

What happened onstage?

STILTON IS A THIEF!

I had to admit Poirat's suspicions were right on the snout. Ash Dow was sneaking away!

WEIRD!

Poirat quickly **FOLLOWED** Ash.

I jumped up to **FOLLOW** Poirat.

Benjamin and Buggy Wugsy jumped up to follow me.

Professor Rindrat noticed we were on the move. He jumped up to **FOLLOW** Benjamin and Buggy Wugsy.

A moment later, Poirat lost Ash Dow . . . and we lost Poirat!

Somehow I found myself at **booth fourteen** — Professor Rindrat's booth.

All it took was a quick **GLANCE** to realize what had happened. The display case containing Samuel Stinktail's rind was . . . **EMPTY!**

Poirat scurried toward me.

"Stop, you cheddar-faced **THIEF!**" he yelled. Then he realized it was me. "Stilton? Don't tell me you've taken up **stealing!**"

At that moment, Professor Rindrat appeared behind him. When he saw me next to the empty display case, he started **SHOUTING**, too.

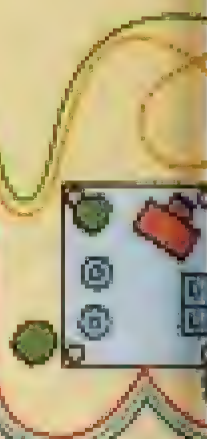
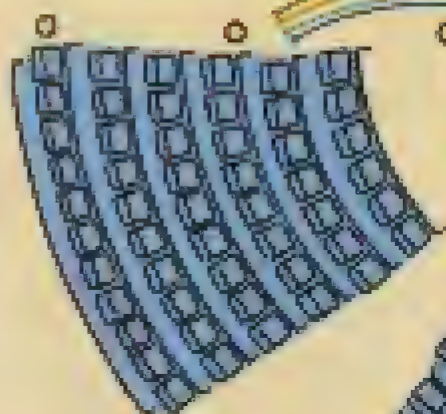
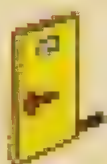
"So it was no accident that you set off my alarm this morning!" Professor Rindrat squeaked. "You stole my **PRECIOUS** rind! You are a thief, Stilton!"



Security agents and nosy rind collectors **surrounded** me instantly.

Flora Ratson started to **INTERROGATE** me. "Mr. Stilton, confess! Where did you **hide** Mr. Rindrat's precious rind? And how did you avoid setting off the **alarm**?"

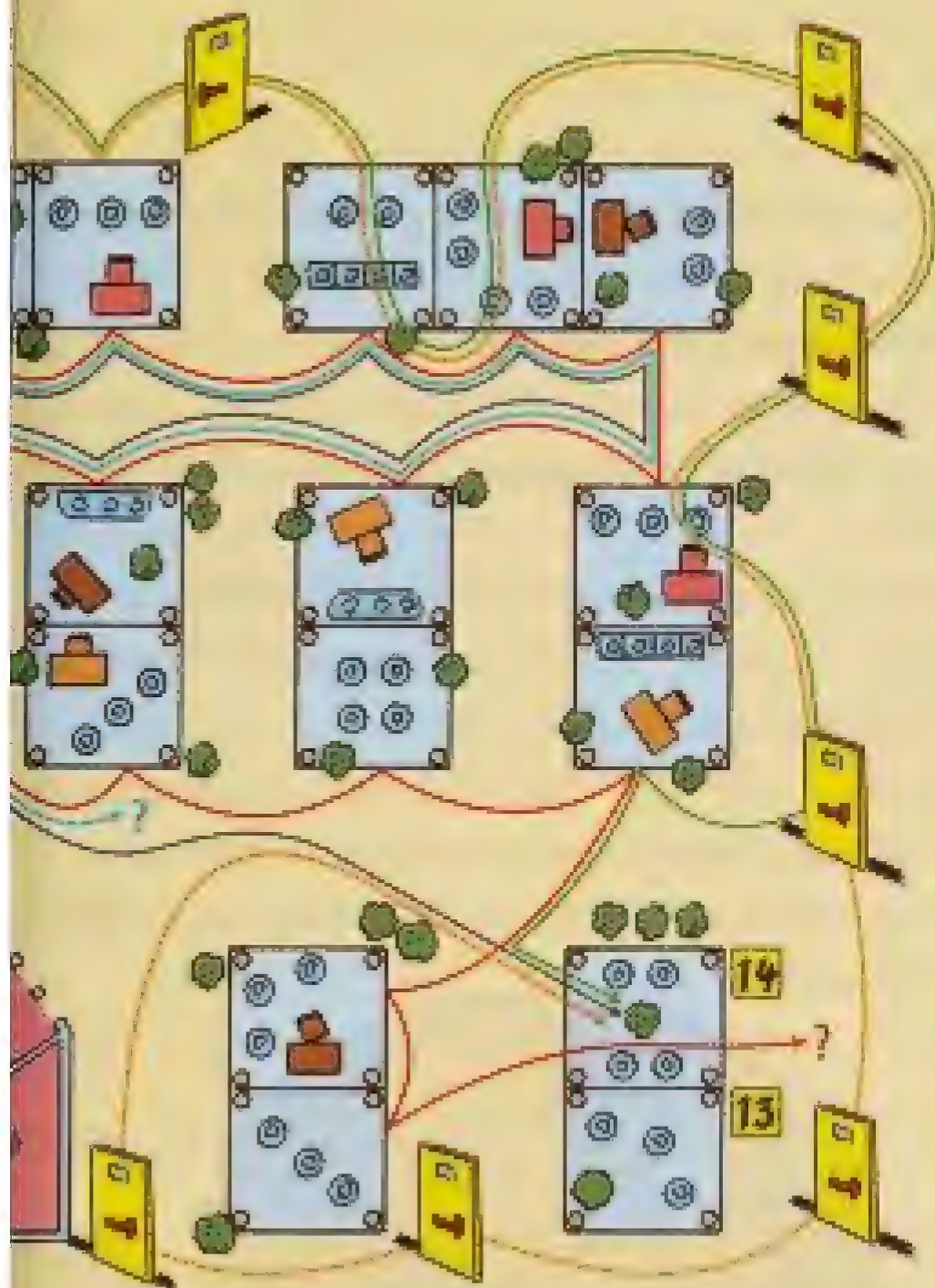
"It—it wasn't me," I **stuttered**. "I was following my friend Hercule Poirat, who was following the real **THIEF**."



Routes:

- Geronimo
- Hercule Poirot
- Benjamin and Buggy Wuggy
- Professor Rindrat
- Ashley Dow





Hercule stroked his whiskers thoughtfully. "Perhaps the real thief is playing **dirty** tricks on us. He's making Geronimo look **GUILTY** so we don't suspect him . . . or her!"

The other collectors scurried back to their booths to **check on** their own rinds. They had all disappeared!

Only **booth thirteen** (mine!) had not been robbed . . . How weird!

"It's Stilton!" someone shouted. "He's the **THIEF!**"

"Give us back our rinds, you **rat burglar!**"

"That's enough." Ms. Ratson snapped. "It's time to call the police!"

Crusty cheese rinds! I was being falsely accused! And I had no way to prove my innocence. I was trapped like a rat in a maze. I was going to **JAIL** for sure!



BLACK GLOVES AND SUNGLASSES

All of a sudden, I recognized a familiar squeak.

"STOP, EVERYBODY!" It's not what you think."

"That's right!" another little squeak exclaimed.

"Uncle G is not a thief!"

"Benjamin! Buggy Wuggy!" I cried, hugging them.

"Where have you been?"

"We **FOLLOWED** the thief, Uncle Geronimo!" Benjamin explained.

"Wait a minute, who are these mouselets?" Flora Ratson interrupted.

"My nephew and his friend," I said proudly. "And I'm sure they'll prove my **INNOCENCE**."

"Let's hear it, then," Ms. Ratson replied. "This better be good, or you're in **hot fondue**, Stilton!"

We have proof!



Benjamin started to explain. "This morning, a female rodent introduced herself to us with a **bogus** name. She said she was

Flora Ratson. She gave us a **security system** for Uncle Geronimo's display case, and she told us how to set the alarm."

"What?" Flora Ratson **objected**.
"I did no such thing!"

Bugsy Wugsy continued. "Right away, Benjamin and I wondered why she used **spray** on the system's keypad, and why she wore dark **sunglasses**, even inside the convention hall."

"I wondered about that, too," one of the collectors exclaimed.

"During the chase, the thief dropped her **glasses!**" Benjamin exclaimed. "Here, Ms. Ratson — try them on, and then look at the keypad."

"Holey cheese!" Flora Ratson squeaked. "With these on, I can tell which **FIVE KEYS** Professor Rindrat has pressed!"

Bugsy Wugsy nodded. "And you can tell the order, too! The first one is the **darkest**, and then they get **lighter** as



The bogus director
gave us a security
system . . .



. . . and she sprayed
something on the keys.



you get closer to the end of the combination!"

"So the spray was used to record the **fingerprints**, not erase them!" a collector with brown fur said.

"That's why my paw was **STICKY**!" an elegant rodent added.

"But that imposter said the keypad would **record** our unique pawprints," another collector said.



"That's just one of many **LIES** she told," Benjamin replied. "Once a combination had been chosen, she used **BLACK GLOVES** to avoid leaving her own pawprints. **Here they are!**"

"See, what did I tell you, Stilton?" Hercule interrupted. He showed me his **YELLOW GLOVES**. "I had already figured out that part of her trick!"



THE HUNT FOR A THIEF

As more and more facts were uncovered, I felt myself relax like mozzarella **MELTING** in the sun. Benjamin and Buggy Wugsy had saved my fur, **big time!**

"It looks like we owe you an **apology**, Mr. Stilton," Flora Ratson said. "We suspected you unfairly."

I blushed.

"Oh, please, it's **NOTHING**," I mumbled.

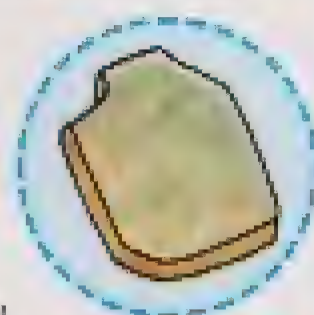
"Now I understand why the **ASH DOW COMPANY** provided their security systems for **FREE**," Ms. Ratson went on. "It was all a trick!"



Benjamin, Buggy Wugsy, and I looked at one another. The name of the company reminded us of something . . . but what?

"Hello! The thief has disappeared with all our

precious cheese rinds!" Professor Rindrat reminded us. "My priceless Stinktail **rind** is lost forever!"



"I can't believe what I'm hearing," Poirat exclaimed. "Okay, scrape the cheese out of your ears, because I'm only going to say this once! The crook cannot have **ESCAPED!**"

"How can you be so sure about that?" the professor asked him.



"Because I am a great **DETECTIVE**, isn't that right, my dear Stilton?"

Before I could reply, he went on.

"While I was pretending to **FOLLOW** Ash Dow, I **LOCKED** this place up tighter than Ratlay's Bank. Our sly thief cannot have gone far!"

"By cheese, I think I've got it, Uncle Geronimo!" Benjamin exclaimed suddenly. "**ASH DOW** is an anagram for . . ."

CLUE 7

Rearrange the letters in Ash Dow. What do you get?

THE SHADOW!

But of course! **ASH DOW** was an anagram for **Shadow!**

The Shadow is an elusive thief who had made my snout spin on many other occasions!

And squeaking of my snout, at that moment something landed right on it!

"OUCH!"

Bugsy Wugsy picked it up. It was a black **BUTTON** with a white **ZERO** in the middle.

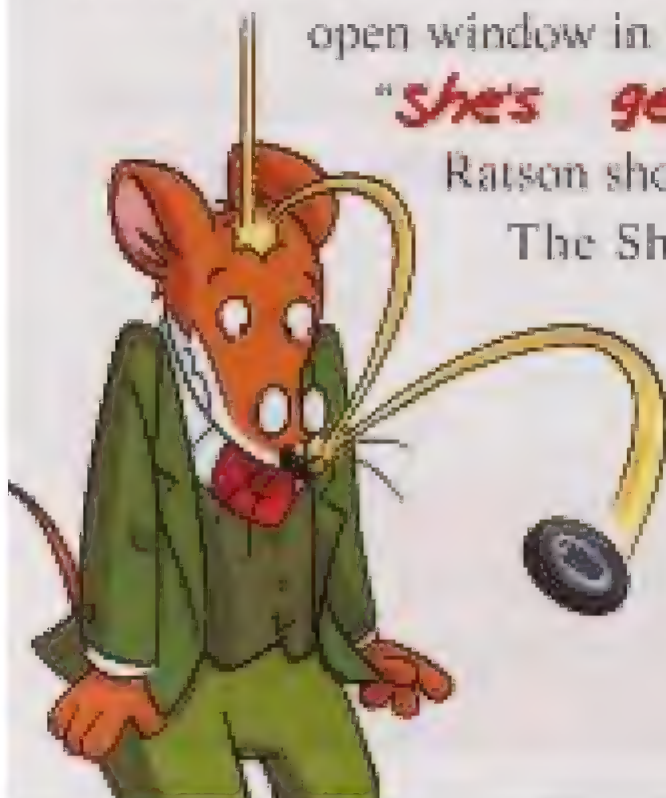
"Look!" Benjamin cried. "Up there!"

We all looked up. A **blond** rodent was climbing the rafters of the exhibition hall. And there was a big open window in the building's ceiling.

"She's getting away!" Ms. Ratson shouted.

The Shadow **smirked** and kept on climbing.

We could hear the sound of a **helicopter** outside.





Then we heard Poirat's squeak.

"Don't mess with Hercule Poirat!"

He pulled out a yellow **slingshot** and a dozen **bananas**.

"WATCH OUT, you sneaky thief!"

He aimed his slingshot.



The Shadow was just about to grab a **ROPE** and jump onto the helicopter when she **slipped** on a banana **peel**. The bag she was carrying slid from her paws.

"Be careful, Ms. Shadow!" I shouted **nervously**. Even though she was a thief, I didn't want her to fall and break a paw.





But the Shadow had already grabbed the rope and was swinging onboard the chopper.

"Burned banana bread!" exclaimed Poirat, grabbing the bag as it fell toward us. He ripped it open. All the stolen **rinds** were inside!

By now the Shadow was safely on the helicopter. She wrinkled her snout at us and then blew me a **kiss**.

What a sly and slippery rodent!



THE SECOND RIND

The Shadow had **escaped**, but at least we all got our cheese rinds back.

I **invited** everyone over to celebrate.

The only rodent who couldn't make it was Hercule.

He said he had an **important** appointment he simply could not miss.

After dessert, Professor Rindrat gave me a little **WOODEN BOX**.

"Please accept this small gift as an apology. I shouldn't have accused you, Mr. Stilton."



I couldn't believe my **EYES**! "But this is . . . is . . ." I stuttered.

"One of Samuel Stinktail's cheese rinds," Rindrat finished. "I never told anybody there were **two**. I wanted to be the only rodent to own his rinds,



but now I know there's another mouse **WORTHY** of collecting them!"

My whiskers were *shaking* with emotion. "How can I ever thank you?!"

Professor Rindrat smiled. "By putting that precious rind in a **safe** place!"

I nodded and scurried over to my display case. Then I turned **PALE** than a slice of mozzarella. "My cheese rinds have been **STOLEN!**" I cried.

At that moment, a **yellow garbage can** rolled into the room.



"To get your rinds back, insert two bananas," a sign on the can read. "Er, better make it three!"

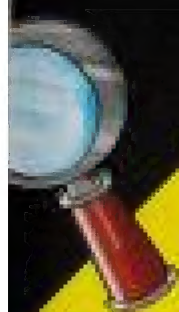


"Hercule Poirat!" I exclaimed. "You get out of there this minute!"

The lid lifted up, and Hercule's **smirking** snout appeared.

"Oh, hello! Did you like my little prank?"

I couldn't help *laughing*. Hercule is a terrible prankster, but he's also a really **good** friend!



YOU'RE THE INVESTIGATOR!

DID YOU FIGURE OUT THE CLUES?

- 1** What did Geronimo notice?
There is a button dangling from the wrist of Ash's shirt.
- 2** Buggy Wugsy and Benjamin seem suspicious of Ms. Ratson. Why?
Flora is wearing her sunglasses for no reason, and she sprayed the keypad without drying the keys.
- 3** What did Buggy Wugsy see?
There is a button dangling from the wrist of Flora Ratson's shirt!
- 4** What have all the M.I.C.E. attendees touched with their right paws?
The security system keypad that Flora Ratson sprayed with her special can.
- 5** How is this Flora Ratson different?
The collar of this Flora's shirt is round and pale blue, while the collar of the other Flora's shirt is white and pointy.
- 6** What happened onstage?
Ash Dow is sneaking away.
- 7** Rearrange the letters in Ash Dow. What do you get?
Shadow!

HOW MANY QUESTIONS DID YOU ANSWER CORRECTLY?

ALL 7 CORRECT: You are a **SUPER-SQUEAKY INVESTIGATOR!**

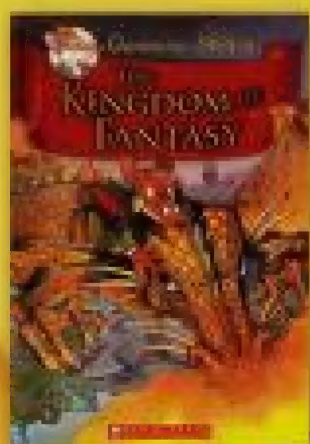
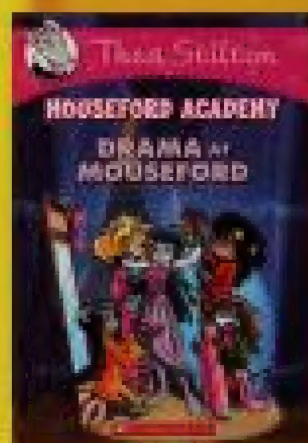
FROM 3 TO 6 CORRECT: You are a **SUPER INVESTIGATOR!** You'll get that added squeak soon!

LESS THAN 3 CORRECT: You are a **GOOD INVESTIGATOR!** Keep practicing to get super-squeaky!





**Check out the many worlds
of Geronimo Stilton!**



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